CHAPTEE XIV

THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIC EQUALITY AND THE EIGHTS

OF A NATIONAL MINORITY

(1) HISTORICAL EETROSPECT

Two proclamations stand out like beacons to illuminate tie re-entry of Jewry into the field of equal citizenship, closed to them since the Middle Ages. The first is contained in the American Bevolutionary Declarations of 1776—that no man "can … be justly deprived or abridged of any civil right as a citizen on account of his religious sentiments or peculiar mode of religious worship"—while the second is the resolution passed by the French National Assembly in 1791 granting civil rights to all French Jews. This resolution was the logical consequence of the theory that all men are equal in the eyes of the law. Characteristics peculiar to separate groups of people were regarded as something purely temporary, a passing result of variations in social and political conditions, while there was a tendency to ignore racial and cultural differences, that is to say, any of the factors whereby humanity is subdivided into various nations. *"Aux Juifs comme nation nous ne donnons rien; aux Juifs comme individus nous donnons tout",* said Clermont-Tonnerre in the

National Assembly, and similar sentiments were expressed by both Mirabeau and the Abbe Gregoire. About the same time the Dutch National Assembly laid down only one condition for the attainment of equal citizenship by Jews, and that was the renunciation of their customs and communal autonomy, so that the difference existing between them and their Batavian fellow-citizens should be one of religion alone. The tendency to improve the condition of the Jews